July 4th. Independence Day. I awoke with the thought, just what is it we are independent of? Are we? It seems on some things we are overly dependent. My little town had a parade. The overemphasis on militarism was nauseating: guns, cannons, an old B-25 flying low overhead. Some of us asked to join the parade as private citizens, protesting the militarism, displaying advocacy for peace, celebrating pacific endeavors. We were refused, denied entry. The Episcopal Peace Fellowship was allowed one banner with their legend only, but otherwise peace could not be mentioned. To do so would spoil the ambience. We could organize our own parade the following week. We were not welcome.

Allegedly the parade was not to condone militarism but "to honor those who gave their lives for their country." Language is so important. Apart from the fact that very, very few of those lives lost were "GIVEN" - for the most part they were TAKEN, wrested from their victims violently, ruthlessly, brutally --, why do we celebrate only those lives taken in or about the battlefield? Surely many other lives have been lost in constructive service to their country. Does violence against other peoples really serve the best interests of our people, or principally the politicians and industrialists who profiteer off others' suffering, who depend on war to keep themselves in office, who depend on war to justify their taking for themselves tax dollars better spent on other more socially useful, constructive projects?

Perhaps we should declare our independence of militarism, of war, of aggression as a tool of foreign and domestic policy.

It is almost two hundred and thirty years since our Declaration of Independence was signed; in that time, much has changed. Rather than independent, we are in fact far more dependent on other peoples, other countries, other nations than our founders aspired to be two and a third centuries ago. Do we still yearn to be free of those dependences? Commercially we are deep into, or striving to be party to, 'free trade' agreements: Central America, North America, the Western Hemisphere, the world. We rely on military alliances to provide fodder for our foreign adventures. We support unpopular regimes to keep their peoples in their place. We depend on the rest of the world, and they depend, however shakily, on us. Perhaps the truth of the matter is that, far from being independent, we are interdependent, with all peoples, all countries, all nations -- albeit truly some more so than others.

Perhaps what we should be celebrating, applauding, and encouraging is not just those whose lives were sacrificed militarily in service to flawed foreign policies, but our recognition, acknowledgement and support of America's interdependence with all the peoples of this planet, our reliance on them and their reliance on us to behave responsibly, to act...
decently, to be considerate of and foster the well-being of all the inhabitants and environment of this planet, not just of the tiny minority who call this country home. Could we celebrate not just the lives lost but those willingly provided and spent in useful, constructive, beneficial service to the world community of whom we are just one small interdependent part.

Let's celebrate and encourage not our independence but our interdependence with all humanity. Why not?

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